

In weak and failed states it has become increasingly difficult for the security forces to maintain control over force and violence. Both during and after conflicts large numbers of weapons have been lost to non-state actors including for example militant political groups and organised crime syndicates. There is also a major flaw in the way in which peace support operations focus upon problems pertaining to weapons. Too few are collected and almost none are decommissioned. We also recognised in all states the problem of social exclusion and the implications of the privatisation of security. Increasingly violence is seen as a means of solving differences and redressing inequalities. Where the state is weak or non-existent there is a strong demand for illegal weapons for self-defence.

We also believe that relatively strong and legitimate states have a growing illegal weapons problem which has yet to be sufficiently recognised by the light weapons community. One of the most important drivers is the growing culture of violence. In addition, within the European Union, for example, some ethnic communities are being infiltrated by criminals with military training. Although it is more difficult to smuggle weapons into the European Union when this does occur there is a growing trend toward the militarisation of crime & witness the use of RPGs to force entry into ATMs. There is also a growing concern that motorcycle gangs are becoming more organised and are seeking sophisticated and highly capable weapons of war. Because strong states have more effective security forces there is less demand for weapons that cannot be concealed, such as assault rifles. However, there is a growing demand for pistols and for smaller machine guns such as the Uzi. This is not yet a major security problem but the situation needs to be monitored with care. Moreover, as the European Union expands and its borders reach the Balkan states and Russia opportunities for arms smuggling will inevitably increase. We also believe that it will be extraordinarily difficult to control illegal flows of weapons from the former Soviet Union and certain ex-Warsaw Pact countries, such as Bulgaria. If for some reason patterns of demand should change for the worse, light weapons proliferation could emerge as a major European security issue. We are also aware that in Europe and elsewhere weapons travel with people and their causes. Weak and failed states provide a near risk free conduit for arms traffickers. For example, illegal weapons are moving from the former Yugoslavia into Europe via Albania & Greece and Crete in particular is a well documented destination. In North America the problem is as much about the more misuse of illegal weapons, both military and civilian. Firearms stolen from legal owners represent a thriving grey market whereas the wholly illegal market tends to be firmly tied to the drug trade.

In weak and failed states the dynamics are very different. We accept that in regions such as southern Africa governments and NGOs are fully aware of the scale and nature of the problem. We also believe that it is only a matter of time before organisations traditionally disinterested in security issues come to recognise the need to address the underlying causes of illegal weapons proliferation. In the case of weak states the availability and misuse of weapons can lead directly and indirectly to state failure. Once a state has failed, a complex political emergency becomes especially difficult to address when weapons are available to criminals, militants and as well, those concerned for their personal safety when domestic security structures have collapsed. **Often weak and failed states are further affected by a strong gun culture which may legitimise the private ownership of light weapons which were originally procured for the exclusive use of the security forces.** In some cases such as South Africa we identified a strong action reaction